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Preface

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The preparation of a history of the Office of Central Reference within reasonable limits of length and reader interest presents an almost unique challenge within the Directorate of Intelligence. In contemporary terms, OCR might indeed be called a "conglomerate" because it has encompassed such a wide variety of functions and products under single management, ~~and because~~ ^{its} many corporate activities and interests have required the establishment and maintenance of an exceptionally large number of contacts within the Agency, the Intelligence Community, and, indeed, the Government at large.

The mission of OCR through the years has encompassed requirements; collection; liaison with other Government agencies; the directing of briefing and debriefing programs; the maintenance of an ^{central} Agency ^{and several specialized branches} Library; the receipt, dissemination, indexing, storage, and retrieval of a major portion of the documents and graphics received by the Agency; the maintenance of the Government's largest ^{positive intelligence} biographic file on foreign personalities and the preparation of finished intelligence reports regarding them; leadership of the

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- 2 -

Community in the pursuit of improved information handling techniques and relationships; the development of advanced machines and methods for handling the rapidly growing mass of data flooding into intelligence channels; the support of the Historical Intelligence Collection; and, for a time, the management of the Foreign Documents Division and all of its varied interests. This list is by no means exhaustive. One can add ~~the development of an all-source center~~ the establishment of extensive files on industrial installations and support from its inception of NPIC and related ^{activities} ~~interests~~; responsibility for classification and TOP SECRET controls for the Agency at large; major participation in the Vital Materials and Emergency Planning programs; active participation in and direction of the collection of photography and publications on a world-wide basis; support of the ^{25X1X7} and International Conferences Programs and, indeed, many other regular and ad hoc services too numerous to catalog.

In the early planning for this history, serious consideration was given to the writing of a history of each of the Registers and Divisions of OCR but this was soon abandoned as being a greater undertaking than time and available manpower would permit. Consideration should be given in the ^{future} ~~preface~~, however, to the

SECRET

- 3 -

preparation of histories of the Biographic Register and perhaps one or two other major elements of OCR. There exists a draft history of HIC, which may be completed at a later date; some OCR history should be included in the history of the Collection Guidance Staff - particularly OCR's involvement in requirements. The major contributions of OCR to CODIB will appear in a history of that committee scheduled for preparation in the future; the CHIVE experience will be further elaborated in a history in preparation

A useful paper could be prepared analyzing the many user surveys conducted by OCR and why it still does not know what the analyst really wants.

To bring all of the elements of this conglomerate into focus for the reader, the author has tried to deal with OCR as a whole, weaving in only enough of its specific activities to provide an impression both of function and movement over time. As a support organization, much of what OCR has done has involved just plain drudgery where for many each day has been much like the day before; there have been notable examples of pioneering accomplishments in information handling and in setting the pace for others to follow; but, on the whole, there has been a minimum of glamor and a modicum of praise.

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